

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

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USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMEMBASSY LONDON

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AMEMBASSY SOFIA

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 7723

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR,UR,US

SUBJECT: U.S. PARTICIPATION IN SOVIET VE DAY CEREMONIES

GENEVA FOR USDEL CSCE

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1. SUMMARY. U.S. PARTICIPATION IN THE SOVIET CELEBRATION
OF THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF VE DAY CONSISTED PRIMARILY OF
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THE SENDING OF AN OFFICIAL DELEGATION HEADED BY AVERELL

HARRIMAN TO THE MOSCOW CEREMONIES, THE ATTENDANCE OF A VETERANS' DELEGATION AT CEREMONIES IN MOSCOW AND VOLGOGRAD (STALINGRAD), THE DEDICATION IN MURMANSK OF A MEMORIAL TO ALLIED HELP IN WORLD WAR II, AND A SHIP VISIT TO LENINGRAD THE WEEK AFTER THE ANNIVERSARY. U.S. PARTICIPATION WAS AIMED PRINCIPALLY AT EMPHASIZING THE U.S. AND ALLIED ROLE IN THE WAR EFFORT AND AT REDUCING SOVIET DISTORTIONS ABOUT THAT ROLE. WE THINK IT SUCCEEDED IN DOING THIS, ALTHOUGH THE U.S. EFFORTS PROBABLY REACHED A VERY SMALL PERCENTAGE OF THE SOVIET POPULATION. THIS CABLE PROVIDES A RETROSPECTIVE ANALYSIS OF U.S. PARTICIPATION AND SUGGESTS THAT, IN FUTURE JOINT ENDEAVORS WITH A HIGH SOVIET PROPAGANDA CONTENT, WE GIVE HIGH PRIORITY TO WINNING SOVIET ASSURANCE OF SUFFICIENT PRIME-TIME TELEVISION COVERAGE OF THE U.S. SIDE OF THE STORY. END SUMMARY.

2. THE HARRIMAN DELEGATION. THE HARRIMAN DELEGATION'S SCHEDULE DURING ITS STAY IN MOSCOW MAY 5-10 CONSISTED PRIMARILY OF ATTENDANCE AT OFFICIAL EVENTS (YOUTH DEMONSTRATION ON RED SQUARE, CEREMONY, RECEPTION, AND OFFICIAL CONCERT IN PALACE OF CONGRESSES) AND A WREATH-LAYING CEREMONY AT THE TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER. THE SOVIET PRESS ANNOUNCED THE DELEGATION'S ARRIVAL AND PRINTED THE GOVERNOR'S ARRIVAL REMARKS CONCENTRATING ON U.S. WARTIME ASSISTANCE TO THE U.S.S. R. IT NOTED GOVERNOR HARRIMAN'S CONVERSATION WITH KOSYGIN AND BREZHNEV, AND ANNOUNCED THE DELEGATION'S DEPARTURE. A THREE-MINUTE STATEMENT BY THE GOVERNOR APPEARED ON THE NATIONAL EVENING NEWS PROGRAM ON MAY 7 AND A THREE-MINUTE INTERVIEW WITH HIM (BOTH ARRANGED BY THE EMBASSY) WAS BROADCAST ON MOSCOW RADIO (MAYAK) THAT SAME EVENING AT 11:30 P.M. AN INTERVIEW WHICH HE GAVE TO TASS WAS NEVER PUBLISHED IN THE MOSCOW PRESS, THOUGH IT WAS USED ON TASS ENGLISH. AT NONE OF THE OFFICIAL EVENTS WAS ANY PROVISION MADE BY THE SOVIETS FOR ANY STATEMENT BY VISITING DELEGATIONS. APART FROM VOA COVERAGE (PARA 9), OUR DELEGATION'S OPPORTUNITIES FOR GETTING ACROSS OUR POINT OF VIEW TO THE SOVIET PUBLIC WERE THEREFORE RESTRICTED TO THE BRIEF MEDIA EXPOSURES NOTED ABOVE AND TO THE GOVERNOR'S TOAST AT THE BUFFET

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SUPPER AT SPASO HOUSE OF MAY 9, WHICH WAS ATTENDED BY 60-70 HIGH RANKING SOVIET OFFICIALS AND MILITARY OFFICERS. THE GOVERNOR'S TOAST ADEPTLY DEFLATED SOVIET BRAGGADOCIO BY EMPHASIZING THAT BRITAIN CARRIED THE BRUNT OF HITLER'S ATTACKS VIRTUALLY ALONE FOR TWO YEARS BEFORE EITHER THE SOVIET UNION OR THE UNITED STATES BECAME ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS IN THE WAR. A TV SPOT LONGER THAN THREE MINUTES WOULD HAVE PROVIDED A GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO GET SUCH POINTS

ACROSS TO A MASS SOVIET AUDIENCE.

3. LENINGRAD SHIP VISIT, MAY 12-17. THE FIRST POST-WAR U.S. NAVY SHIP VISIT TO THE SOVIET UNION TOOK PLACE IN LENINGRAD THE WEEK AFTER VE DAY, MAY 12-17. TWO IMPRESSIVE WARSHIPS, THE USS LEAHY AND USS TATNALL, WERE DOCKED AT THE PASSENGER PORT FACILITIES, MAKING THEM REASONABLY ACCESSIBLE TO THE LOCAL POPULACE, THOUGH NOT PROVIDING THE HIGH VISIBILITY OF THE NEVA MOORING ORIGINALLY REQUESTED. APPROXIMATELY 12,500 LENINGRADERS BRAVED A GAUNTLET OF SECURITY PERSONNEL TO BOARD THE SHIPS FOR AN EXTENSIVE TOUR. CROWDS OF CURIOUS SOVIETS CONSTANTLY MILLED AROUND THE PIERS TO ENGAGE SAILORS IN CONVERSATION AND LISTEN TO CONCERTS BY THE 6TH FLEET BAND. VISIBILITY. THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS GAVE US THE CHANCE TO GET THE SHIPS TO LENINGRAD, AND UNDOUBTEDLY THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN LENINGRAD BY ITSELF SERVED AS A REMINDER TO THE SOVIETS THAT OTHERS HAD PARTICIPATED IN THE WINNING OF THE WAR. HOWEVER, THE SHIP VISIT DID NOT SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASE SOVIET APPRECIATION OF U.S. WAR CONTRIBUTIONS. THE TIMING, IN THE WEEK FOLLOWING THE MAJOR VE DAY ACTIVITIES, INSURED THAT THE EVENT WOULD NOT BE TOO CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH THE VICTORY OR BE GIVEN EQUAL BILLING WITH OTHER MAJOR CEREMONIES.

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4. MURMANSK. SUPPORTED BY USIA OFFICERS FROM MOSCOW AND
LENINGRAD, AND AN ASSISTANT NAVAL ATTACHE FROM MOSCOW,
ADM. FRANKEL, HEAD OF THE U.S. VETERANS DELEGATION AND
A FORMER COMMANDING OFFICER OF OUR OPERATIONS IN MURMANSK,
WEIGHED IN WITH HIGH VISIBILITY IN MURMANSK MAY 7-8
WHILE HELPING DEDICATE THE FIRST SOVIET MEMORIAL TO
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ALLIED ("ANTI-HITLER COALITION") HELP IN WORLD WAR II.
LOCAL RADIO AND PRESS (POLYARNAYA PRAVDA) CARRIED HIS
REMARKS IN FULL AND ALL CONCERNED TOOK ADVANTAGE OF A
NUMBER OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE OPPORTUNITIES WITH LOCAL
PARTY AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AS WELL AS CITIZENRY TO
NOTE ALLIED SUPPORT. OUR COUNTER-PROPAGANDA EFFORT WAS
THUS VERY SUCCESSFUL IN MURMANSK, WHERE, PERHAPS NOT
COINCIDENTALLY, LIVING MEMORY OF ALLIED COOPERATION IS
STILL STRONG. THOUGH EVENTS IN MURMANSK RECEIVED NO
COVERAGE IN MOSCOW'S CENTRAL PRESS, SOMETHING OF A
BREAKTHROUGH OCCURED WHEN THE POPULAR WEEKLY MAGAZINE
OGONYOK (2,050,000 CIRCULATION) PUBLISHED (MAY 23) A
ONE-PAGE ARTICLE BY THE EMBASSY PRESS ATTACHE (WHOSE
BYLINE WAS INCLUDED) DESCRIBING THE MURMANSK CEREMONY.
THE ORIGINAL TEXT WAS SHORTENED BY HALF, BUT THE TEXT
AS PRESENTED (PLUS TWO PHOTOS) NEVERTHELESS SERVED TO
PUT BEFORE LARGE SOVIET AUDIENCES THE IDEA IN CONCRETE
TERMS OF ALLIED CONTRIBUTION TO THE WAR EFFORT.

5. ELBE RIVER MEETING CEREMONY. ON APRIL 28 AT THE
INVITATION OF SOVIET INSTITUTE OF SOVIET-AMERICAN RELA-
TIONS, THE DCM AS CHARGE AND THE ARMY ATTACHE ON BEHALF
OF DATT ATTENDED A PROGRAM AT FRIENDSHIP HOUSE DEDICATED
TO THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SOVIET-AMERICAN MEETING

ON THE ELBE RIVER. THE TONE OF THE PROGRAM WAS EXTREMELY FRIENDLY WITH THE EXCEPTION OF A SPEECH BY M.A. MIL'SHTEYN OF USA INSITUTE, WHICH PLAYED THE FAMILIAR THEME OF THE USSR'S PREDOMINANT ROLE IN WW II AND THE RELATIVE INSIGNIFICANCE OF LEND-LEASE AID. THE ARMY ATTACHE, AS LAST SPEAKER, DELIVERED PREPARED REMARKS IN RUSSIAN IN WHICH HE EMPHASIZED THE MAJOR ROLE WHICH THE U.S. PLAYED IN ACHIEVING VICTORY IN EUROPE IN SPITE OF HAVING TO FIGHT SIMULTANEOUSLY A POWERFUL AND DETERMINED ENEMY IN THE PACIFIC. HE STRESSED THAT VICTORY WAS POSSIBLE ONLY BECAUSE OF THE EFFORTS AND SACRIFICES OF BOTH THE AMERICAN AND SOVIET PEOPLES, AND HE EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT MEMORY OF THE ELBE MEETING WOULD ASSIST IN PROMOTING A SPIRIT OF COOPERATION IN STRIVING FOR A LASTING PEACE. A TASS REPORT OF EMBASSY ATTENDANCE AT CEREMONIES WAS CARRIED BY RED STAR ON APRIL 29. THE ARTICLE CITED THE ARMY ATTACHE'S REMARKS THAT THE ELBE

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MEETING SYMBOLIZED THE CULMINATION OF GREAT WARTIME ALLIANCE AND THAT THE MEMORY OF THE MEETING WILL ASSIST IN PROMOTING A SPIRIT OF COOPERATION IN STRIVING FOR A LASTING PEACE. HIS OTHER REMARKS WERE NOT MENTIONED.

6. VETERAN'S DELEGATION. SEVEN VETERANS OF VARIOUS U.S.-SOVIET COOPERATIVE ENDEAVORS DURING THE WAR TOOK PART IN FESTIVITIES IN MOSCOW AND ALSO TRAVELED TO VOLGOGRAD, AND (IN ADMIRAL FRANKEL'S CASE) TO MURMANSK, TO PARTICIPATE IN CEREMONIES AS THE SOVIET VETERANS' COMMITTEE. AS REPORTED IN DETAIL IN MOSCOW A-203, THE RECEPTION GRANTED THE DELEGATION WAS CORDIAL, AND THEY WERE IN FACT OFTEN SINGLED OUT FOR SPECIAL TREATMENT NOT GIVEN OTHER NATIONAL DELEGATIONS TRAVELING ON THE SAME CIRCUIT. OUR DELEGATION WAS GIVEN ADEQUATE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE PUBLIC STATEMENTS. THESE STATEMENTS WERE NOT REPLAYED IN THE PRESS, HOWEVER, NOR WAS THE FACT OF THE PRESENCE OF THE DELEGATION GIVEN ANY EMPHASIS.

7. VOA. VOA BROADCASTS RELATING TO THE PRESENCE IN THE USSR OF OUR DELEGATIONS PROBABLY WERE THE MOST EFFECTIVE INSTRUMENT WE HAD TO GAIN BENEFIT FROM OUR PARTICIPATION IN THE CELEBRATIONS. THE EMBASSY PROVIDED VOA A TOTAL OF APPROXIMATELY 25 BROADCAST MINUTES OF MATERIAL ON THE DELEGATION IN DAILY REPORTS AS WELL AS WIDE COVERAGE OF THE SHIP VISIT. WE PRESUME THIS MATERIAL WAS REPEATED A NUMBER OF TIMES EACH DAY DURING THE MAY 5-10 PERIOD AND THAT IT REACHED A SIZEABLE NUMBER OF LISTENERS.

8. COMMENT. IN RETROSPECT THE U.S. DECISION TO

PARTICIPATE IN THE VE DAY CELEBRATION IN THE SOVIET UNION WAS IN OUR VIEW THE RIGHT ONE, EVEN THOUGH OUR PARTICIPATION BROUGHT US LITTLE DIRECT BENEFIT. U.S. PARTICIPATION HAD SOME EFFECT, THOUGH IN THE OPINION OF SOME EMBASSY OFFICERS A VERY MARGINAL ONE, IN WINNING PUBLIC SOVIET RECOGNITION OF OUR ROLE IN THE WAR. IT PROBABLY SOFTENED POTENTIALLY HOSTILE PUBLIC SOVIET STATE-

MENTS ON SUBJECTS NOT DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY (E.G., VIETNAM). IT GAVE US AN OPPORTUNITY
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FOR A SIGNIFICANT U.S. PRESENCE IN LENINGRAD AND MURMANSK (EVEN THOUGH THE SOVIETS SUCCEEDED IN DECOUPLING THE LENINGRAD SHIP VISIT FROM THE ANNIVERSARY ITSELF). IT GAVE GOVERNOR HARRIMAN SOME TV TIME, PROVIDED THE OPPORTUNITY FOR A MURMANSK COOPERATION ARTICLE BY THE EMBASSY PRESS ATTACHE IN A MASS-CIRCULATION SOVIET WEEKLY, AND ALLOWED VOA A PEG FOR SETTING OUT A MORE BALANCED PICTURE OF THE WESTERN ROLE IN THE WAR. FINALLY--A NEGATIVE ASSET--IT AVOIDED THE IRRITATION (AND POSSIBLE FALLOUT IN BILATERAL RELATIONS) WHICH OUR REFUSAL TO PARTICIPATE WOULD INEVITABLY HAVE CAUSED THE SOVIETS, FOR WHOM THE CELEBRATION WAS SIGNIFICANT FOR GENUINE AS WELL AS AGITPROP REASONS.

9. IN NOTING THE POSITIVE EFFECT OF OUR EFFORTS TO HIGHLIGHT THE U.S. ROLE IN THE WAR, WE WOULD ALSO SAY THAT THOSE EFFORTS PROBABLY GOT THOUGH TO A VERY SMALL PERCENTAGE OF THE SOVIET PUBLIC, WHICH WAS BOMBARDED CONTRIBUTION OF THE USSR'S ALLIES (SEPTEL). WHILE SOVIET PROPAGANDA WAS OBLIGED TO TAKE THAT CONTRIBUTION INTO ACCOUNT MORE THAN IT HAS ON PREVIOUS ANNIVERSARIES, WE SUSPECT THAT THE NET EFFECT ON THE AVERAGE SOVIET CITIZEN OF THIS SMALL NOD IN OUR DIRECTION WAS MINISCULE. MOREOVER, TO AT LEAST SOME DEGREE, THE PARTICIPATION OF ALLIED DELEGATIONS GAVE SOVIET PROPAGANDISTS AN OPPORTUNITY TO TRY TO ASSOCIATE US WITH A TENDENTIOUS SOVIET INTERPRETATION OF THE WAR AND OF POSTWAR HISTORY.

10. ALL IN ALL, THE U.S. EFFORT PROBABLY DID BETTER IN LIMITING THE DAMAGE THAN MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED A FEW MONTHS AGO, AND THE SHIP VISIT AND MAGAZINE ARTICLE WERE CLEARLY POSITIVE. WE WERE WEAKEST IN SOVIET TELEVISION COVERAGE. IN OUR VIEW AN IMPORTANT LESSON TO DRAW FROM THE VE DAY EXPERIENCE IS THAT, IN JOINT PROJECTS IN WHICH SOVIET PROPAGANDA DISTORTION IS LIKELY TO BE SIGNIFICANT, THE U.S. SHOULD DO ITS BEST TO WIN IN ADVANCE SOVIET ASSURANCE OF SUFFICIENT TV PRIME TIME TO PRESENT OUR SIDE OF THE PICTURE. WHILE SOVIET TREATMENT OF THE APOLLO-SOYUZ

LAUNCH WILL NOT BE SO TENDENTIOUS, IT WOULD BE WORTHWHILE
PINNING THE SOVIETS DOWN ON THE SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THEIR
INTENDED TV TREATMENT. WE WILL FOLLOW UP WITH SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS
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IN SEPTEL). AND IN FUTURE PROJECTS WE SHOULD MAKE A POINT OF RAISING
THE QUESTION OF SOVIET TV COVERAGE EARLY ENOUGH IN THE PLANNING
PROCESS TO ALLOW OURSELVES THE MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY TO GET OUR
OBJECTIVES
SERVED.
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